

RECORD REVIEW

VERVE-FORECAST FVS-9510, SOUNDS OF AFRICA. One 12-inch Stereo L.P. from the A.B.C. News, Television Production, "Africa", edited by Andrew Tracey.

This is a selection from "the many hours of music" recorded by the "Africa Project" teams of the A.B.C. Television News. In June, 1966, they sent no less than "ten camera crews to Africa to make a full-length feature film covering every aspect of modern Africa — everything from politics to big-game. Eight months and more than a million dollars later they came back with probably the most fascinating and complete film coverage of a continent ever made." If this should hold true (the reviewer did not see this documentary film) we have to state that the musical documentation, in spite of the claims of the editor of the disc, is by no means representative. We accept the editors notice that there are gaps and "it would take many more years, and dollars, to do justice to the music alone" but still it is difficult to understand why such a poor record resulted when very rich material must have been presented to such a multi-team expedition in so many parts of the continent. (See editor's note.)

It is quite unintelligible why, for example, there are not only fragments but mini-fragments of music presented on this disc (which may have served their purpose in a film but not on a disc). There are many cuts of less than a minute duration. The Lagos Police band (with Scottish Bagpipes) is just striking up the tune "Scotland the Brave" and then turned off after only 20 seconds. A Congo Jazz band plays, what sounds like, the beginning and end of an item: 7 seconds in all. On the jacket we find there is an item of 2:35 kora music from Senegal which is broken up into three different cuts for no apparent reason.

Even if we admit that a representative selection of African Music on one 12-inch disc poses serious problems or, because we realise the difficulties of such a venture, it is difficult to understand why space is wasted with a few bars of the Lagos Police band, a bit of Church singing and such types of music which hardly serve to complete the picture of the immense variety of musical styles in Africa. There can be no objection against a representative selection of modern African Music as this would teach us a lot, but to squeeze a few pieces of this kind into a compilation of otherwise traditional indigenous music just to make it appear richer and more exhaustive is absurd.

It would be unjust not to mention that there are a few interesting items on the disc like the extract of Yoruba Folk Opera (Side 1, 1): The well recorded Fong Flutes from the Cameroons (Side 1, 6) which form a striking parallel to the horn ensembles of the Eastern Congo (and have their parallel in western Congolese vocal music too; thus posing the question: which came first?). The Xylophone orchestra from Moçambique (Side 2, 1). Cut off at 2.46 seconds, some fine recordings from Uganda (Side 2, 2-4); a fragment of an Ethiopian ballad-like song with the one-stringed *tcherewata* (a striking parallel to the music of the *maignoge* or middle-playing singer of the Hausa) (Side 2, 5); and especially the rarely heard Sotho *lesiba* flute (Side 2, 7b).

Ed.: I had to make do with the sketchy sound material brought back by visually-oriented camera crews. A.T.N.T.

FAVORIT F35 102, VERKLINGENDE TROMMELN: Mit Max Lersch im unbekannten Afrika.

One 12-inch mono disc of Austrian production. Distributed in Germany by Electrola Gesellschaft mbH, Maarweg 149, D-5 Köln-Braunsfeld.

This well recorded L.P. is also the product of a filming team in Africa. With less crew and less dollars they have also tried to give a representative picture of the variety of cultures and ways of life in Africa. The record is similar to the one reviewed above in that it also aims at giving an impression of the large musical styles of the continent.

This is done in quite a different form. The editor recorded his commentary on the disc, in German, which is a description of the country, places and people as well as the situation in which the music was recorded. Consequently the music is used as a background to the spoken word which, in this case, has the advantage of saving space. The musical examples are of sufficient length to be absorbed in their essence and to illustrate the narrative. This is not a record of African Music as such, but it is the narrative of a journey through the African Continent together with musical examples. This disc has rightly been recommended for use at schools and educational centres.

As the recordings are largely documentary one finds some unusual items on the disc, as, for example, portions of religious ceremonies which have so far been rarely, if at all, recorded in sound. It is these recordings which, although fragmentary, make the disc interesting. It even contains an example of Bushman language phrases. Geographically it covers the continent from Rabat to the Kalahari and from the Niger to Ethiopia.

PHILIPS P 08. 672 L, AFRIQUE. One 12-inch mono disc of the series "Voyages Autour du Monde". FF 19, 95.

Another large L.P. with music from many parts of the continent, music, however, of very mixed musical quality. The disc contains five items on one side and six on the other, which is quite reasonable and enables one to get a good impression of the individual musical recordings presented.

If it is conceded that modern forms of African Music deserve the interest of the musicologist we must accept the arrangements by de Paur of the songs from Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya which almost fill the